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SUBJECT: CHALABI'S SERVICES COMMITTEE SHOWS PROMISE

REF: BAGHDAD #3259

¶1. SUMMARY: Pending a formal executive order from Prime Minister, Nouri AL Maliki, the services committee holds regular meetings and shows early signs of cooperation and action. At an October 25 meeting, the Committee made several decisions. END SUMMARY.

Fuel and Health Tops the Agenda

¶2. On Thursday, October 25, Dr. Ahmed Chalabi chaired the service committee meeting. The attendees were the Deputy Minister of Electricity, the Inspector General of Health, the Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Tahseen al Shekhli (Fard al-Qanoon spokesperson) and representatives from the USEMB and Coalition Forces. Dr. Khalid Rasheed and Dr. Karesh, both of former Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Zobai's staff, were also in attendance.

¶3. First item of discussion was fuel. Committee members agreed that access to various types of fuel present the greatest obstacle to their respective ministries. While discussions ranged from production to distribution to storage and corruption, several courses of action were offered. Chalabi suggested that the services committee immediately address fuel supplies. He intends to raise two potential proposals with the Prime Minister: allow ministries to import their own product or appoint a body to import fuel to Iraq.

¶4. The IG of Health discussed issues including physician and bed shortages, low wages, an inadequate emergency care network and a non-existent referral system. Additionally, the IG expressed significant concerns regarding the current supply chain for durable medical equipment (DME) and pharmaceuticals (Rx).

¶5. The Committee will send several health proposals to PM Maliki. The Ministry of Health (MoH) requested an additional 100 million dinars to pay salaries for the doctors working in public health facilities, such as the public health centers (PHCs). A suggestion to additionally compensate on-call doctors appeared to also be a part of this funding request. (NOTE: Embassy staff is working to clarify whether this was part of the funding request or an additional proposal. END NOTE) Chalabi also offered to lobby the PM to adopt a proposal before the Prime Minister's Office that would allow the World Health Organization (WHO) to procure equipment and pharmaceuticals on behalf of the MoH.

Electricity

¶6. The Ministry of Electricity representatives named security as their number one issue; secure facilities as well as security for MoE personnel to rapidly repair downed lines. Representatives from the Iraqi Army offered their continued assistance to provide a secure perimeter for MoE to conduct repairs. The MoE stated that the existing process to make such arrangements (72 hours) was too time consuming.

¶7. The MoE reported on the 10 amp gauges being installed in

residences throughout Baghdad. MoE representatives report that the project is largely successful, regulating personal use and increasing main generator efficiency by limiting the load. Residences furnished with such amp limits are reportedly able to operate air conditioners, refrigerators, televisions, etc. Next year the MoE wants to upgrade to digital limiters which will allow remote adjustment of the limits based on increased generation. The committee suggested a media campaign to educate the public about this project. (NOTE: It is not clear whether this committee will launch a campaign, ask the PM to launch a media campaign or were simply suggesting that the MoE launch a media campaign. END NOTE)

¶18. In an attempt to wrap up the 2+ hour meeting, Chalabi asked the MoE what they wanted and/or needed. They asked that the diesel importation issue be resolved, and that the PM address the militias who are preventing plant operators from complying with load shedding requirements through intimidation and other fear tactics. Chalabi requested a list of areas who are not complying in order to present that list to the PM.

Comment

¶19. Awaiting the PM's executive order, Chalabi's Services Committee forges ahead. The meetings thus far are well attended and address larger issues through an open dialogue. This meeting marks the first set of requests that Chalabi will take to Maliki. It is not clear what will occur once this information reaches the PM, but Chalabi could be the political impetus necessary to revitalize the services push in the continued absence of DPM Zobai.

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